

# HUMANE

## Heads of University Management & Administration Network in Europe

### Internal Systems and Structures

Aveiro, 15-16 October 1999

#### Abstracts and Discussion

#### **“Structures of Success: Ensuring Quality at the University of Aveiro”**

*Jorge Baptista Lopes and Prof. JA Rafael, University of Aveiro*

#### **Abstract**

In pursuing an international dimension, the Portuguese Higher Education (HE) system has been facing our challenging times with determination and confidence. The University of Aveiro is trying to adapt to modern needs by thinking forward in a rational way, being both reactive and pro-active in order to be able to anticipate and overcome the obstacles in its path. Since the early nineties, a process of continuous change has been set up, the results of which now appear to be coming to fruition. The process has been taken on board as a general commitment by all institutional staff at all levels, including the support of the Rector's office and the other governing bodies.

The presentation begins with a brief description of the institution's main features, its evolution and its place within the national HE system, and then analyses the special features of this particular community to illustrate the overall action plan. The speakers assume that - like human beings - a University is capable of defining its own destiny and acting in conformity with its own will. The point is to find out the proper means to do that within its special context of untouchable individual freedom.

To do this, the University must re-define its own distinctive future. Internal structures and systems have to match the fundamental strategic decisions. The University of Aveiro sees itself as an autonomous human (and humane!) organisation that constructs its own future as a centre of awareness, investigation and culture where all members can develop their personality in an atmosphere of liberty, accountability and quality. Provided that new attitudes and new forms of behaviour are everywhere adopted, it seems to us perfectly possible to re-think the University through a global process of

change, which, with respect to the organisational aspects, has to begin by redefining and rebuilding the existing structures.

The presentation also focuses on a simple, rational and coherent model which Prof Rafael (Pro-Rector) proposed for the organisation of the University Services. This model is designed to ensure the delivery of all the assumed 'pre-requisites', by giving the various institutional areas the necessary autonomy, responsibility and the appropriate means of quality assurance, while simultaneously preserving both the central decision-making policy and the capacity to monitor and assess the devolved units. This process is meant to build a flexible system of cells merging into a set of interactive and complementary aims, a holistic system where everybody may take charge of his/her own destiny either individually or as a group.

### **Discussion**

The speakers stressed that the approach outlined here was merely a set of suggestions as to how one might re-examine and re-frame administrative functions. They also stressed that the model provided a starting-point for evaluation and action, and that the danger of uniformity of approach (suggested by some participants) was only theoretical. They noted that the office responsible for introducing the programme comprised three members of staff.

In response to a question on how to involve the whole University, Jorge stressed that each unit (department) had a person or a committee. [It is interesting that this corresponds to the method mentioned by Peter Plenge (Aalborg) in the Oslo IT seminar, and to that suggested by Anne-Grete Holmsgaard (Copenhagen) in the Environmental seminar in Dublin.] Some participants wondered why one could not merely transplant standard procedures which had been used elsewhere, but the presenters argued that such changes should form a framework that was specific to a particular institution. The aim was an evolutionary style of change, which was sometimes perceived as difficult in that institutions tended to change only in the face of a major crisis. By means of this gradualist and logical approach the aim was to ensure continuous improvement. What was special was the stated and explicit links all the way from the work of the Rector to that of students.

### **Is the Physical Library Virtually Finished?**

*Drs R.H.T. Bleijerveld: Universiteit van Amsterdam*

### **Abstract**

Fundamental and practical reasons have prompted the Universiteit van Amsterdam (UvA) to build a new Library. The more fundamental driving forces are threefold, namely:

- changes in society;
- developments in Information Technology
- new thoughts about Teaching/Learning and Research.

The more practical reason is that the current housing of the University Library is completely inadequate!

In planning this new library, which should also integrate the Library of the Faculty of Humanities, the UvA has been trying to think through the impact of the changes on the functions of the library. These functions are, and will remain: 1) the collecting, 2) the pre-serving and 3) the making available of information. Next to this the Library becomes ever more important as the place on campus where students come to study. The library changes from a *product organisation* with a *task orientation* to a *service organisation* with a *market orientation*. The digital Library does not so much replace the traditional one, but adds new possibilities and products.

The building itself will comply with a number of demands. It will be a light and spacious, functional but at the same time monumental building, with an open structure. Flexibility and durability are the main features. A lot of attention has been paid to creating a cosy, inviting and inspiring environment. The Library will have long opening hours and high standards of service. Organisationally, there will be a division of tasks in which the University Library functions as a back office and the Faculty Libraries as front offices.

### **Discussion**

In response to questions Ruud emphasised that UvA had a very democratic process - and correspondingly lively discussion! He outlined the financial policies which had allowed funding for redevelopment to come from reserves, and noted the extreme importance of training, with the first priority given to students, and then extended to staff. He admitted that some "old-style" librarians were not entirely happy with the new scheme, but stressed that as a general rule librarians now saw themselves (as had been intended) as managers. One participant observed that at his own university the attempt to increase space by 50% over a six-year planning period had been rather spoiled by the fact that (thanks to things like electronic access to journals) over 50% of the seating spaces were now regularly empty. Ruud underlined what he had said in his presentation about the importance of flexibility.

## **“Contract Management between the University and Faculties: a Pilot Scheme”**

***Dietmar Ertmann: Kanzler, University of Mannheim***

### **Abstract**

In comparison with other German universities the University of Mannheim is of medium size. It is relatively young as a full university (created in 1967), but prior to that it had been a significant business school. It therefore concentrates on the economic and social sciences. In both teaching and research the subjects of law, mathematics/computing and technical computer sciences, linguistic and cultural studies are intertwined with the disciplines of business management, economics, politics, psychology, social psychology and sociology.

Since 1991 the University has worked continuously on process re-engineering in order to simplify and decentralise administrative processes. We believe that traditional structures cannot be changed by a “big bang” but only step-by-step. With the support of the Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft and the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science we started a project in 1996 to further strengthen the Faculties by building up their own administrative support, helping them to make better use of their financial autonomy.

Three model Faculties were chosen, and they have agreed to a contract management scheme with the University. The aim of our project is to grant a high degree of autonomy to Faculties yet on the other hand to allow the University to influence certain key policies by contract management. The first contracts were concluded in 1998 and were tailor-made to suit the different needs of the various Faculties. They are renewable each year.

The three model Faculties clearly had different needs. The ***Faculty of Economics***, with a very high research profile but a shortage of first degree students, contracted to increase the amount of first-year students through a number of defined steps. The ***Faculty of Humanities***, with a large number of registered students but an insufficient number of graduates, contracted to take measures to reduce the drop-out rate and the make its financial allocations to the various departments more transparent. The ***Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science*** agreed to start a new degree course in computational mathematics, and to make this offer known in secondary schools, both by providing contact hours in such institutions and by allowing top pupils from the secondary level to attend classes in the University.

The presentation outlines the procedures that led to these contracts, the difficulties which were encountered, and the methods implemented to ensure that agreed targets are being met.

## Discussion

Irrespective of its actual age, Mannheim was like all other German universities in facing the implications of a shift from line budgets to global budgets, with discretion as to the internal allocation of funds among Faculties. The idea of contract management was an agreement between parties on common aims, both in order to improve performance but also to satisfy government requirements for proof that funds had been properly used.

Dietmar explained why the three model Faculties had been chosen. For example, despite its strong research record Economics had been losing student numbers for some time; Humanities had too many students; while Mathematics & Computing Sciences rather needed to provide new courses to attract students. The contracts were for a three-year period started with defined objectives, moving on to more qualitative judgments. But in essence, the contract allowed Faculties to expect more financial rewards for having met their side of the bargain by delivering what in each case was part of the university's mission.

Replying to questions, Dietmar noted that it had been necessary to move to a situation where Deans served longer than the short periods which had previously been accepted. A four-year term was thought most appropriate. This gave a much better chance of having a coherent policy. Faculties derived two main benefits: firstly, they obtained more money to deliver aims which were included in the contract; but also there were incentives specific to each Faculty - for example, it was possible to argue for more space as opposed to funds. He agreed that there were some dangers in encouraging Faculties to increase student numbers without strict controls on quality, but - since access to HE was rather open anyway - thought that the advantages of the contract in terms of performance outweighed any such risks.

Contracts were negotiated with each Faculty Board - Dietmar stressed the need for agreement here, since coercion simply could not work. The contract was prepared and drawn up by the Kanzler, but signed by the Rector and Dean.

# **The Effects of Greater Autonomy on the Internal Structures of German Universities**

*Klaus Peters, Kanzler, University of Wuppertal*

## **Abstract**

German Higher Education consists of two main sectors, the University sector, which is mainly rooted in the tradition of the German Research University, and the Fachhochschul sector, which is orientated towards vocational education. As for the Universities, the German System is a publicly funded one. Most Universities are governed and financed within the 16 'Länder', or respective states, of the Federal Republic of Germany. Their legal status is a public body and at the same time an organisational unit of the respective state.

Until the end of the 1980s the institution's budget was part of the state budget and the state budget laws applied to universities in the same way as they did to other areas. The bulk of the funds received by the universities were not for arbitrary expenditure, but were earmarked in the form of line-item budgeting by the political administrative sector.

Since the beginning of the 1990s the German system of university financing has been characterised by a clear trend towards enhanced financial autonomy. In almost all German states the permission to decide on the expenditure of public grants was shifted from the political-administrative sector to the universities. Line-item budgeting is being more and more replaced by budget flexibility and lump sum grants.

The presentation will illustrate some different concepts of financial autonomy within German Universities and tries to make clear the fact that financial autonomy is not itself desirable. An evolution of the effects of greater financial autonomy requires a close look at the interests behind the concept of autonomy and the internal framework of the university.

## **Discussion**

Klaus noted that the movement towards greater budgetary autonomy in Germany was at different speeds - in one Land, it was possible to transfer forward 1% of any surplus, while in others the whole of any annual surplus could be carried forward. He noted that, in common with other countries, there was a political wish to create autonomy since it allowed governments to pass the blame for unwelcome financial cuts on to the universities which decided them. He underlined his view that - like complete moral freedom, perhaps - total autonomy could be quite a burden, and preferred to stress that autonomy was acceptable only within recognisable limits.

There was considerable discussion of whether it was right for institutions to make a financial "profit". The question was even sharper in those countries where the diversion of private funds merely led to a reduction in State funding. This was linked to the question of tuition fees, and here the experience of the UK was discussed, whereby - particularly in Scotland - tuition fees had become a major issue for government policy, forcing HE to the centre of the political stage.

### **"The implications of 'massification' for internal structures and systems"**

***Janusz Karczewski-Slowikowski: Registrar, Manchester Metropolitan University***

#### **Abstract**

This presentation will use the Manchester Metropolitan University ('MMU') as a case study for considering how institutional structures and *student support systems in particular* may need to change in order to cope with the "massification" of higher education (HE).

The term "massification" refers to the widening and extending of socio-economic participation in HE rather than just an expansion of student numbers. It involves the recruitment, retention and (hopefully) successful graduation of students from what are termed "non-traditional backgrounds" and in particular those from the poorer socio-economic groups. Whilst the number of persons entering HE in the UK has grown dramatically over the past decade or so, the participation rate of those from disadvantaged backgrounds remains low: only 14% of those aged 18-21 from unskilled family backgrounds entered HE in 1997 compared with 49% from the upper income groups. The UK government is encouraging institutions to identify strategies for widening participation through a special funding initiative which allocates money on the basis of the socio-economic background of entrants.

Wider participation involves more than the recruitment of greater numbers from poorer backgrounds. Retaining, developing and motivating them to achieve their full potential will be crucial if wastage rates are not to be unacceptably high. Institutions will need to have in place adequate support structures and systems to facilitate this, and will need to plan for delivering HE successfully to students for whom the traditional model of HE would not be a natural choice.

Whilst many traditional UK universities may be described as elitist in terms of their student intakes, this is not true of the former Polytechnics (now the 'new' universities) in which the largest numbers of "non-traditional" entrants to HE are to be found. The MMU, itself one of the 'new' universities has a successful history of both increasing and widening socio-economic participation. There is an old saying that "What Manchester does today, London does tomorrow", and Manchester's success as one of the largest student centres in Europe reflects a long history of commitment to extend the benefits of education "to the masses". However, the pace at which "massification" is now to be pursued has increased and the MMU will be as challenged as any other institution to respond to the demands this will bring.

With over 33,000 students, the MMU is the largest conventional UK University. It was established as a Polytechnic in 1970 by the merging together of several colleges which had their roots in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. When first established, the Polytechnic had fewer than 5,000 students. Following mergers with several colleges in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and its planned response to government expansion plans, it grew rapidly in the ensuing years, before becoming a University in 1992. The University's buildings are dispersed across a wide area of Manchester and one Faculty is 65Km to the south of the city.

Whether as a collection of Colleges, a Polytechnic or in its present form, MMU's mission has always been to provide (higher) education for those with the ability to undertake the demands of its courses and achieve the standard required for its awards. In this context, the University has often looked for indicators of potential ability other than the traditional "A" level grades gained at school with the result that it has recruited many students who do not possess formal entry qualifications. The University's admission policies and practices together with its large and diverse portfolio of courses which are delivered through a variety of modes of study have resulted in a varied student mix and a female population which exceeds the male (57:43).

It is against this background of historical, structural and organisational change and development that an examination of MMU's past and present internal structures and systems may help us identify what will be required for a system of mass HE in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## Discussion

Janusz noted that all speakers had mentioned autonomy, management and increased access (ie, allowing more students to take part in HE). He wished to stress that he himself was totally committed to massification and a differentiated system. He illustrated the various avatars of his own institution, and the constant mission of improving the minds and conditions of those who traditionally did not benefit from university education.

It was clear to him that massification meant that less money would be spent on research. He was sad that so many universities pursued the goal of becoming excellent research institutions when they had no such background, and felt that there should be a more honest recognition of the true status and mission of institutions. He also disagreed with a colleague who argued against the significant expansion of the Humanities as opposed to Engineering.

In the latter part of the afternoon the participants enjoyed a boat trip on the *ria* (lagoon) of Aveiro, before a traditional regional dinner. This included a *fado* recital at which Jorge Baptista Lopes (having opened the seminar with his presentation) revealed his own considerable talents as a singer, thus giving an extra dimension to HUMANE's interest in professional development.

*Summary prepared by Trevor Field*

Individually designed/produced.

Reserved for a particular use (for this and other phrases see HUMANE's "Guide to the English of Higher Education")

The percentage or proportion of students who leave (or "drop out"; cp Dr Ertmann's text) before graduating.

Favouring or preserving an élite.

The "A" (i.e., Advanced) level school-leaving exam, as opposed to "O" (ordinary).